

Transforming Relationship to Gain Full Humanity:

A Participatory Evaluation of Network of Immigrant & African American Solidarity



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This is a *living* copy given by NIAAS to be used as a dialogue starter in communities of color. Download the report at our website www.niaasboston.com.

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Executive Summary

“Transforming Relationships to Gain Full Humanity: An Evaluation of the Network of Immigrant & African American Solidarity” reports on a nearly four year period from the launch of the Network of Immigrant & African American Solidarity (NIAAS) initiative in January 2011 through December 2014. NIAAS is led by Co-Coordinator, an immigrant of color and an African American, and is advised by a Core Group made up of 10 people of color - 5 African Americans and 5 immigrants of color - who are leaders in their community and provide guidance to NIAAS. The initiative emerged after 8 months of research and thoughtful planning following the end of the Center to Support Immigrant Organizing’s Organizers of Color Initiative (OCI). Following a series of “reflective conversations”, NIAAS was created as a “purposeful space” to continue the relationship building between immigrants of color and African Americans which had begun via the OCI. NIAAS’ founders recognized that both groups face similar issues of oppression related to systemic racism, and these experiences have greatly affected their understanding of each other. The launch of NIAAS also came on the heels of the economic recession, which disproportionately impacted people of color; a historical moment of increased anti-immigrant sentiment; as well as amplified media attention on the deaths of black men and women at the hands of law enforcement.

Evaluation Goal:

To assess the ways in which NIAAS has built relationships and solidarity between immigrants of color and African Americans by assessing its dialogues, tools, and processes; articulating lessons learned in the development of this Initiative, and creating possible options and paths for sustainable growth in the future.

Evaluation Process

Using a participatory evaluation approach, the co-coordinators, an evaluation consultant, and a documentation consultant, in discussion with the Core Group, designed the evaluation. Interviews and focus groups were used to collect data from 26 participants from 7 stakeholder groups on their experiences in their participation with NIAAS and their thoughts for future growth. The evaluation consultant analyzed the data using themes identified at the onset of the evaluation. The analysis was further refined through reflective discussions with the co-coordinators and the documentation consultant; the final analysis was shared with the Core Group members for final feedback.

Evaluation Findings

Learning

Co-Coordinator and Core Group members described the process of developing NIAAS as organic and emergent. In their opinion, the Core Group acted as a “laboratory” for testing out ideas, negotiating tensions and planning learning activities to build solidarity between immigrants and African Americans. Over time, NIAAS leaders came to see transformational relationship building as central to NIAAS’ mission and directly linked to leadership development.

Interviewees who participated in NIAAS workshops and dialogues named three elements central to the transformational relationship building process:

1. Creating spaces for the sharing of personal stories; this process supported close connection and, as a result, an ability to go deeper. These stories included experiences of coming to the U.S., a community's history in the US once here, and the ensuing search for rights and a sense of belonging;
2. Mutual education that involves relating and valuing the history of African Americans and immigrants of color; and
3. Hearing and validating experiences of oppression, which helps overcome the trauma caused by these experiences.

Accomplishments

In the period of its implementation, NIAAS significantly increased its outreach and participant engagement, tripling the number of community leaders involved from 60 at its launch in 2011 to 189 by the end of 2014. NIAAS conducted outreach using its website, flyers, email distribution, word of mouth, and other media. Among these, word of mouth was found to be its most effective outreach method.

"NIAAS is doing personal & political level work which no organization or space is currently doing in the city, metropolitan area or region."

- Participant

The facilitation skills of Co-Coordinator and Core Group members were named as a key to creating an open and impactful space. All participants interviewed responded that NIAAS's work was valuable and unique.

Every respondent in the study commented that the tools they learned and the dialogues they engaged in contributed to building relationships between African Americans and immigrants of color. A number of these tools, such as migration mapping or the participatory timeline, created spaces for storytelling. Most respondents spoke to the great power of this storytelling to create trust, understanding, and connection between these communities.

Recommendations

Immigrants of color who participated in NIAAS were primarily from the Caribbean and Latin America. Several participants, positively affected by their experiences with NIAAS, would like to see immigrants of color from other regions of the world involved as well.

NIAAS needs to cast a wider net of potential participants for its activities. Respondents observed that NIAAS reached an intergenerational group and wanted to see this maintained.

Alongside dialogues, NIAAS formed partnerships with six community social justice organizations that identified conflicts between immigrants of color and African Americans as an ongoing, serious issue. The demands of these organizations, coupled with capacity issues, made consistent participation difficult. Organizational representatives offered several suggestions to make these collaborations work more effectively in the future.

"Through telling stories of migration and where we came from, our lineage and heritage, I felt more connected to people who appeared different and wanted those conversations to continue in a bigger way."

- Participant

Conclusion

Core group members, participants, organizational representatives and two foundations supporting NIAAS affirmed the unique value that it brings to the work of fostering deeper connections between immigrant of color and African American communities and, in particular, its ability to create a safe and productive space for conversations around issues of race, culture, immigration, and oppression. Funders agreed that philanthropy often supports short-term, quantitative, business-like models of social entrepreneurship, yet they noted that anti-racism work is gaining attention. They emphasized further development of grassroots leadership and expanding visibility as key to NIAAS' future progress.

Three primary areas for growth were identified: 1) Increasing the diversity of participants, 2) Further developing NIAAS's model through education, relationship building and activism, and 3) Establishing a longer-term relationship with participants.

Insights that evaluation participants offered regarding effective practices to be shared with the larger movement include:

- establishing urgency;
- allowing for a slow process;
- being intentional;
- emphasizing mutual education;
- creating space for difficult conversations;
- addressing relational dynamics; and
- being explicit about addressing systemic racism and exclusion.

"It is mega-important, in the context of what this country is dealing with now - the racial violence. It is very important work that NIAAS is seeding and carrying out."
- Participant

As racial violence and hatred continue to saturate media and popular rhetoric, the insights gained into NIAAS's process and recommendations for sustainable growth offer a model that will dive deeper into building relationships and solidarity that will allow for more communities to transform, heal, and regain their full humanity.

Source: NIAAS Workshop I'm Migration Workshop, 2014





Source: NIAAS, Mapping Tool used at the Brazilian Independence Fair, 2013

Introduction

This evaluation covers a nearly four-year period, from the launch of the Network for Immigrant & African American Solidarity (NIAAS) in January 2011 through December 2014. The process of evaluating and writing this report has been aligned with the values of NIAAS's participatory approach. We used some of the NIAAS tools and methods - such as storytelling and participatory listening – in order to build our understanding of the impact of NIAAS's work.

In March, 2010, organizers of color who had previously participated in the CSIO sponsored Organizers of Color Initiative expressed a strong desire to explore what was needed to overcome marked differences in culture, history, and language among African Americans and immigrants of color which created barriers to solidarity and successful social change work. Following 8 months of research and planning, the Center to Support Immigrant Organizing launched NIAAS. Designed to offer a “purposeful space”, the name NIAAS was inspired by the Swahili word ‘NIA’, which means ‘purpose’.

From its start, NIAAS has been developed with leadership from African Americans and immigrants of color. NIAAS is led by two Co-Coordiators, a Colombian immigrant and an African American, and is guided by a 10-member Core Group, which consists of five African American and five immigrant community leaders. NIAAS' mission - to create opportunities

and spaces for dialogue, relationships and solidarity among immigrants of color and African American communities in greater Boston – is focused on bridging the divide between these communities. The results of our evaluation work confirm that NIAAS helps stop the spread of racial and ethnic divisions among communities of color.

African Americans and immigrants of color share challenges related to systemic racism – police harassment, job discrimination, bad schools, polluted environments, etc. Yet instead of fostering unity born of shared struggle, the lived experiences of structural racism have pitted African Americans and immigrants of color against each other for scarce resources. Competition and division have prevented the development of powerful African American/immigrant alliances that could challenge structural racism and advance the struggle for equity.

NIAAS' Statement of Underlying Values emphasizes the importance of eradicating divisions and scapegoating.

The evaluation and reporting process has served as another outreach and dialogue tool that is shaping NIAAS' development. In our interviews, NIAAS participants have deepened their understanding of NIAAS' efforts, tools and framework. Through analysis of interview data, NIAAS Core Group members have shaped their own understanding of NIAAS' impact, challenges and directions for the future.

“Overall, NIAAS will contribute to the work of dismantling institutional and structural barriers that reinforce oppressive conditions and give impacted communities the language to name those barriers, rather than blame themselves and each other. Communities will develop newer more effective resistance strategies and build solidarity with others facing similar struggles.”

–NIAAS Statement of Underlying Values

This report is a “living document,” which will be used to continue the conversation among people of color and others interested in building meaningful relationships and solidarity as a key component of social change. Moreover, it will continue to be used for participatory sharing and learning with wider audiences, including supporters and funders, to support NIAAS' efforts to continually redefine its work, purpose, and impact.

Historical Moment

NIAAS was launched in 2011, on the heels of an economic recession that disproportionately impacted people of color, in the midst of a period of increased immigrant deportations and anti-immigrant sentiment, and as police violence toward Black men and women was drawing increased media attention. The growth of NIAAS has come during an era of sweeping demographic change in Boston: The population of people of color in Boston has grown from 5.3% in 1970 to 53% in 2010. African Americans in Boston made up 22% of the population in 2010, increasing from 16% of the population in 1970. In 2013, immigrants made up 27.7% of Boston's population, with 57% of the immigrant population from

Dominican Republic, China, Haiti, El Salvador, Vietnam, Cape Verde, Colombia, Jamaica, Guatemala, and Trinidad and Tobago.

History, culture, and language vary greatly among people of color. Immigrants coming to the United States are shaped by the histories - spoken or unspoken - of racism, colonialism, and oppression in their countries of origin. These experiences impact how immigrants interact with and relate to African Americans and other immigrants of color in the United States.

Immigrant attitudes are also shaped by representations of African Americans in American media consumed abroad. Then, once immigrants begin to live in the U.S., the anti-black stereotypes they encountered overseas are reinforced by U.S. media, institutions and social policies – making many immigrants want to avoid African Americans.

U.S. media, policies and institutions foster stereotypes of immigrants of color as well, leading African Americans to adopt negative attitudes toward immigrants from Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, etc. The media continually reinforces these stereotypes, leading to xenophobic and Islamophobic attitudes among those born and raised in the U.S. Importantly, stereotypes regarding sexuality, gender, class and age exacerbate and complicate racial stereotypes, leading to sub-divisions and barriers among communities of color that go beyond ethnicity.

The recession has had a disproportionately negative economic impact on African American and immigrant communities. Increasing income inequality, already inordinately high rates of unemployment, predatory lending practices, as well as disproportionate lack of access to health care, quality education, and affordable housing are socioeconomic realities that devastate both groups. In addition, criminal justice and deportation systems impact the lives and well-being of immigrants of color and African Americans in similar and significant ways. Police brutality, deportations, increased cooperation between local law enforcement and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the school-to-prison pipeline, and mass incarceration - all demonstrate the ways in which the oppression of people of color is intertwined.

Within the last several years, the homicides of unarmed Black men, women and children by law enforcement agents have coincided with a unique confluence of technology and media. Now, an ordinary resident can bring extraordinary attention to events formerly not accessible to the public.

Social justice activists have framed this violence as institutional systemic racism. Their analytical focus has been a critique of white supremacy. They have used this focus as an organizing tool to inspire, foster and organize new social justice movements, such as #BlackLivesMatter.

Amidst a system that divides our communities and intertwines our oppression and liberation, NIAAS strives to build strong, positive and productive relationships between African Americans and immigrants of color in the pursuit of an end to oppression.

Evaluation Goal & Framework

The aim of this evaluation was to assess the ways in which NIAAS has built relationships and solidarity between Immigrants of Color and African Americans. We conducted the evaluation by assessing NIAAS dialogues, tools, and processes; articulating lessons learned in the development of the initiative; and creating possible options and paths for sustainable growth in the future.

The NIAAS evaluation process was based on a participatory approach that rooted decision-making and planning in the hands people of color, with the support of consultant expertise. The evaluation design team included Co-Coordinators Trina Jackson and Luz Zambrano; research and organizational development consultant Curdina Hill; and documentation consultant Kevin Ferreira. The Core Group gave input to the design team.

Through a series of discussions, the evaluation team identified 7 areas for evaluation:

1. Key Aspects of NIAAS' Development
2. Outreach & engagement of immigrants of color & African Americans
3. Effectiveness of dialogues & tools
4. Effectiveness of organizational partnerships
5. Areas for expansion
6. Funder perspectives
7. Future growth & improvement

Evaluators used qualitative data collection methods, including focus groups, individual and small group interviews. These methods effectively met the goals and organizational development needs of the initiative as they encouraged participants to share deep and nuanced insights. The evaluation approach involved “looking back” - asking respondents to reflect on their experiences, observations and the quality of their interactions with the work thus far - as well as “looking forward” - offering thoughts and ideas for future strategy and possibilities.

We identified seven stakeholder groups and organized focus group interviews with 26 participants. We conducted individual follow-up interviews with some long-time participants and founding members. The principal evaluator analyzed the data gathered using the 7 evaluation areas mentioned above. She shared preliminary findings with the evaluation team, which then met to discuss results and surface further insights. Finally, we shared the team's findings and analyses with Core Group members in a participatory reflection and learning process that is central to NIAAS's mission.

Findings

Values Affecting the Development of NIAAS

NIAAS leaders shaped the development of NIAAS according to a specific set of values. From inception, NIAAS rooted its underlying values in participatory education, self-reflection, anti-oppression and anti-racism. During evaluation interviews, NIAAS leaders described how these values informed the development of cornerstone practices:

- NIAAS needs to be shaped and led by community members most affected by issues of systemic racism – immigrants of color and African Americans living in greater Boston.
- Not only do all participants have something to contribute to the program, but they are the “experts” in regards to informing NIAAS.
- In an environment of systemic oppression, everyone needs to heal and regain their humanity. Regaining ‘full humanity’ is at the center of NIAAS’ work and needs to ground all NIAAS process and content.
- NIAAS should maintain a balanced representation of immigrants of color and African Americans in key leadership bodies like the Co-Coordinating team and the Core Group.
- NIAAS should consistently strive to deepen the relationships between immigrants of color and African Americans whenever possible.

NIAAS grew organically rather than following a pre-structured program model. The Core Group tested ideas and created learning activities that built understanding between immigrants of color and African Americans. The Core Group and Co-Coordinators described the shaping of NIAAS as a “laboratory” grounded in a mutual learning process. Core Group members brought expertise, specific tools and methods to the space. They tested, transformed and then used their tools and methodologies to design future dialogues and activities. Co-Coordinators initially facilitated NIAAS activities, but over time Core Group members became primary facilitators.

Source: NIAAS Workshop I’m Migration Workshop, 2014.



Lessons learned in the development of NIAAS

Co-Coordinator and Core Group members identified the following critical lessons learned in developing NIAAS from 2011-14:

NIAAS has needed to lift up the value of relationship building as a primary goal in social change work. Social justice and organizing groups are oriented toward action and are constantly pressed to address immediate needs and crises. Given these pressures, they often place less emphasis on spending time to build relationships among African Americans and immigrants of color. For community groups, the goal of building these relationships outside of particular issue-based agendas is not viewed as a necessary component of successful organizing or social change work. NIAAS leaders assert that immigrant/African American relationship building is itself an important component of organizing for change.

Establishing Urgency for Relationship Building

Allowing for the Slow Process

The process of building relationships and solidarity between the groups is a slow process, like simmering a stew, in allowing the space and time for relationships to grow and deepen not just interpersonally but as a collective group. Just as the simmering process tenderizes meat, this relationship process breaks down and reshapes participants' understanding and view of each other, and enable them to see their shared issues and realities. The connections, shared experiences and understanding, the participants then take out into the world and use it both in their personal and work lives.

It is important to communicate the concrete purpose of NIAAS activities and their potential impact on participants' social justice work. Doing so heightens the interest of community leaders in NIAAS activities and increases the engagement of participants once involved.

Being Intentional & Clear about Purpose

"If you can help people understand why we do this, then it's very helpful. People have to see how it's going to help them with today's problems. - Core Group member

Emphasizing Mutual Education

Mutual learning experiences foster deeper relationships and solidarity. Activities that allow immigrants of color and African Americans to explore concepts and experiences central to the realities of each group are critical. NIAAS found that it was critical for immigrants of color to learn about the history of African Americans in U.S., the concept of systemic racism, the legacy of slavery and its impact on race relations and power dynamics. It was equally important for African Americans to understand push-pull factors of immigration, the impact of the global economy on migration, and other concepts related to immigration, including citizenship and legal status and the differences between documented and undocumented immigrants. Dialogues provided opportunities to create mutual understanding when they addressed important histories and current realities. For example, NIAAS activities included a comparison of the chronologies of the U.S. civil rights movements and liberation movements in immigrant countries of origin and an analysis of wealth inequality through a racial/ethnic lens.

It is essential to create environments in which people can ask serious questions about the barriers that exist between communities of color. Participants should be able to speak openly and identify the prejudices and ignorance that can reinforce these barriers.

These spaces need to be promoted as part of an ongoing process central to the work, not just be offered within one workshop. Through dialogues, facilitators and participants should question stereotypes, assumptions and other issues that emerge. Facilitators should address unspoken tensions and establish common connections

Creating Space for Difficult Conversations

Developing Adaptive Tools & Addressing Relational Dynamics

NIAAS tools are valuable to the extent they are adapted to the participants in the room. Tools such as 'The Power of the Story' and the 'Historical Timeline' need to be adapted to each setting. NIAAS leaders took planning time to understand the identities of participants in each group in order to adapt tools to the particular context. The same tool is used differently with a group of new immigrant workers than it is with a group of women organizers or youth leaders. Also, NIAAS leaders needed to be very conscious of identity differences among participants. Facilitators needed to address power dynamics related to class, native English speaking ability, gender and sexual orientation, immigration status, etc. in order to promote relationship building and foster mutual understanding.

Transformational Relationship Building Model

NIAAS leaders referred to the approach of building relationships and solidarity between immigrants of color and African Americans as *transformational relationship building*, which is directly connected to developing community leadership. They identified key elements that transform relationships:

1. It is important to create spaces that help participants tell personal stories of their experiences as immigrants of color or African Americans, and to share those stories between communities.
2. It is important to create spaces that help participants tell personal stories of their experiences as immigrants of color or African Americans, and to share those stories between communities.
3. We need to value and relate the histories of African Americans and immigrants of color, including the historical patterns and differences across various racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.
4. Transformational relationships emerge out of a process of healing after suffering trauma. Immigrants of color and African Americans both face disconnection, feelings of not belonging, treatment as second class citizens, etc. because of the trauma stemming from structural racism. Processes that promote mutual healing lead to transformed and sustainable relationships
5. Story sharing is important for relationship building across differing racial, ethnic and cultural identities as well as for the healing process. Examples of NIAAS story-sharing include:
 - a. Stories of migration and leaving people behind;
 - b. Stories of coming to the U.S. and experiences of being marginalized or devalued and enduring searches for belonging and for restoration of full humanity;
 - c. Stories of immigrants becoming legal citizens and realizing the harsh social and economic realities facing them are no different;
 - d. Stories relating the historical legacy of slavery and struggle for civil and human rights for African Americans.

“Relationship building is not just about people getting along with each other or based on getting a service or working on a campaign but about forming a different and deeper connection to each other, one that will sustain over time.” - Coordinator

Effectiveness and Engagement of Immigrants of Color & African Americans

Since the launch of NIAAS on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on January 29th, 2011, the initiative has held 21 community dialogues or workshops, attended 5 national conferences, and participated in 5 local events around the greater Boston area (see Appendix 2 for examples of events). Over the nearly four year period, NIAAS has tripled the number of community leaders participating in activities, from 60 in 2011 to 189 by the end of 2014. In 2014, participants on average attended 2 events, while Core Group members attended 3 or more events.

Year	Number of Community Dialogue or Workshops	Approximate number of leaders & organizers engaged
2011	5	60
2012	4	95
2013	4	75
2014	6	189

Despite the increases, both participants and Core Group members called for more effective outreach to reach a more diverse population. Most participants found out about NIAAS events through word of mouth. Several people were unaware of NIAAS' use of Facebook or its website.

The majority of participants felt that NIAAS outreach primarily reached people in their existing networks. Several participants felt that communication could be more frequent between the initiative and participants.

Effectiveness of Dialogue & Tools

Participants, Core Group members and Coordinators identified NIAAS' participatory timeline, migration mapping exercise, and theatre of the oppressed as key tools to build relationships and understanding among communities of color. Most participants felt one or

Loved the experience, it was not just about movement building in the US but movement building... in other parts of the world. It gave a richer experience; it put it in a broader framework. It was something very affirming, not just the struggle in the different cultures, but the power and inspiration of that struggle. - Participant

more of these processes and methods helped build shared understanding, allowed for connection to others who came from different cultural experiences and backgrounds, left them feeling inspired and more empowered, and increased their desire to see this work expand.

These tools helped participants move from feeling tense to being more relaxed. Participants expressed a sense of moving beyond the pain of alienation caused by shared experiences of being

mocked when they first arrived in the U.S. and feeling they did not belong here. Having the opportunity to voice their pain and experience the compassion of others as a part of these activities helped the healing process.

Core group members and other participants expressed the overall value of the work as identified in particular elements of the relationship building process:

- Creation of an intentional space that supports authenticity and builds understanding and connection. This process is often experienced and spoken about as creating a healing culture.
- Establishment of connections with physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions through storytelling. One participant described this as a three dimensional process that deepens connections at the interpersonal and collective levels: first, visceral and kinesthetic response that is held in the body; second, the historical framing and relations made; and third, the emotional holding of each other in the sharing process. All of these levels of work bring the group members to a more expansive way of relating and a deeper level of connection.
- Learning a nuanced history and broader narrative in a multicultural, intergenerational space that is not stereotyped or reflective of the dominant narrative.
- Flexibility around dialogue or discussion time. A Core Group member noted that the value of the Core Group as a laboratory was that discussions were not limited by a specific amount of time, but that there was a commitment to continue dialoguing until some degree of closure was reached.
- Quality of the facilitation. Many Core Group members and participants felt that the tools and dialogues were designed and facilitated as an open, flexible, and safe space.

“Telling stories of migration and where we came from, our lineage and heritage, I felt more connected to people who appeared different, and I wanted those conversations to happen in a bigger way.”

- Participant

“NIAAS creates an inviting and healing culture; it connects people; it broadens your understanding and connection, and you leave wanting more.”

- Participant

“I see the strength of NIAAS and I hope it remains and deepens... When walking into the room, feeling the invitation, the openness has to do with the people leading the experience. I feel it is central to the results. If NIAAS considers expanding and deepening the work, it must make sure it has people who can model the values and can create the spaces it does. I feel it is a critical success factor.” - Participant

Effectiveness of Organizational Partnerships

In an effort to deepen and expand its work, NIAAS decided to bring its resources and tools to community organizations with complementary missions that expressed a need for them. At least six social justice organizations were identified as possible partners, and initial conversations were held with key leaders in each organization. In a second stage of planning, representatives from three of these organizations were interviewed. Two of the representatives were executive directors of organizations with which NIAAS had previously partnered.

All three respondents representing organizational partners strongly affirmed the value of NIAAS's work at the personal and political level. Each respondent perceived their work as complementary to NIAAS and saw conflicts between African Americans and immigrants of color as an ongoing, serious issue. In particular, some noted a need to address the tensions emerging from the shifting power balance among people of color due to demographic changes resulting in Latino and Asian communities growing faster than African

"On a personal level, the way the system is set up, African Americans see me [a black immigrant] as a threat instead of seeing that we face the same oppression."

-Organizational Partner

American communities in Boston. In the context of a country dealing with increased media attention on racial violence, organizations pointed to the formation of groups like Asians for Black Lives Matter, as examples of NIAAS-like models for new support and solidarity.

Due to either of two primary factors – an inability of the organizations to prioritize work with NIAAS or inconsistent follow up due to a lack of capacity on the part of NIAAS – these efforts could not proceed to implementation. The focus of the evaluation inquiry, therefore, was what could be done differently to make such collaborations work more effectively in the future.

When potential partner organizations were asked about how to make collaborations between NIAAS and social justice organizations more effective, these recommendations emerged:

- Integrate the NIAAS analysis into the work that the organizations are already doing, for example the training of staff or members;
- Identify areas of change and development within an organization that involve race and/or culture and could be entry points for NIAAS' work. For example, if an organization is planning to become bilingual, it might be an opportunity for dialogue and involvement with NIAAS. Ongoing communication between the organization and NIAAS will be necessary in order to take advantage of emerging opportunities like these within a partner organization.
- Identify specific places within the structure of an organization or within its organizing work where NIAAS could be supportive;

- Build relationships with potential partners by creating a presence within coalitions in which these groups participate;
- Work on jointly-sponsored events during African American History month or Immigrant Heritage month;
- Make the purpose of the work more explicit, encourage communities to address issues related to racism and immigrant oppression;
- Partner with regional or national groups doing similar work.

Organizational representatives also listed the following challenges to solidarity work:

- Lack of funding for organizing and the short term nature of most funding support;
- Competition among nonprofits around who speaks for the “community”, or who gets to lay claim to a certain geography and why;
- Different perceptions of privilege and risk within different communities and how those differences create barriers to building unity;
- American individualism - the need to counter the attitude of “let me take care of mine,” which diminishes possibilities of community building.
- Mainstream narratives in the media and popular imagination, which raise and reinforce stereotypes between African Americans and immigrants of color.

*“Individually, **the issue of what unity means** creates tension. For example, comments that “we are all in the same boat” - we don’t always feel that way. We need to explain more carefully what it means to be “in the same boat.” I think many Latinos believe that because of variation in Latino skin color and privilege related to skin color [for those who are lighter-skinned] we are not at risk in the same way. Latinos need to recognize the responsibility we have regarding privilege related to skin. Also, it is important to recognize the fact that African Americans have been in this country for so long that the sudden growth in the numbers of Latinos is going to cause tension and concern about what this means for them. It is not being raised so much, but the tension is still there.” - Organizational Partner*

Expanding the Work to the National Level

As a vehicle for influencing the field more broadly, NIAAS decided to bring its transformational relationship building work to national conferences on immigration and social justice organizing. These gatherings offered opportunities to demonstrate how to overcome resistance to conversations about systemic racism and tensions between immigrants of color and African Americans and model how to do this work productively, in ways that initiate and deepen understanding between communities and increase possibilities for systemic change.

“A high level of interest exists because people are looking for effective models that can be easily implemented in other places.”

- Conference Session Coordinator

From 2011 to 2014, NIAAS participated in 5 national conferences, including the National Immigrant Integration Conference, Black Immigrant Network’s Kinship Assembly and the Conference on Immigrants, Detention and Mass Incarceration at Boston University. One of the conference coordinators for the Immigrant Integration Conference was interviewed about the importance of NIAAS’s participation for the field, the level of interest in this work and suggestions for future presentations or workshops. This conference is attended by a diverse group of nonprofit organizations, think tanks, funders, and federal, state, and local

officials. The coordinator felt that NIAAS’ participation was very important to the immigrant organizing field even though many people may not perceive African Americans as a typical “receiving community.”

Conference organizers said that a key strength of NIAAS’s session was the ability to create powerful and deep personal connections in a way that is not typical at such large conferences.

Source: National Immigrant Integration Conference Session, 2013



Funder Perspectives

Representatives from two funding partners were interviewed about the alignment of values between their foundation and NIAAS, their perception of NIAAS's progress, and perspectives on social justice funding within philanthropy. Both philanthropic partners found that NIAAS's work toward racial equity and/or its support of movement building aligned with their grant making priorities. Each observed that NIAAS had built bridges between African Americans and immigrants of color, one saying, "The work NIAAS is doing is hard work; we understand that it is individual, that it cannot be scaled quickly, and it takes time." Both funders would like to see NIAAS become more grounded in the community and bring more people into the process. In addition, they wanted to hear more from the community about the impact of NIAAS' work.

Funders described a trend in which social justice philanthropy is moving away from a support for organizing work, in part due to the difficulty of measuring the impact of this work. Some foundations, such as the New York Foundation, are experimenting with how to assess the long term impact of organizing efforts. Another trend mentioned is the growing support for social entrepreneurship, social innovation, and venture philanthropy. These approaches place emphasis on business planning, data, and measurement. NIAAS funding partners explained that while other funders may have some interest in income inequality, they do not often connect this work to social justice philanthropy. One funder noted that anti-racism work is gaining more attention, shifting the field away from "diversity work," which could benefit NIAAS.

In thinking about the future, funders recommended a general approach that is oriented toward the development of grassroots leadership and emphasized putting the voices of leaders front and center in the work.

Opportunities for Moving Forward

All evaluation stakeholders spoke about the unique value that NIAAS brings to the social justice community and the importance of its work to build deeper connections between African Americans and immigrants of color. All evaluation participants want to see NIAAS reach a larger audience. Both Core Group members and respondents from organizational partners mentioned the importance of drawing in a more multi-cultural and intergenerational audience, particularly reaching a more diverse group of immigrants of color.

The Coordinators of NIAAS have been exploring participant interest in a membership structure to increase engagement and reach into new communities. While most participants have been receptive to the idea, a number of them felt that NIAAS needs to further clarify its model and then build a vision for a membership structure based on that model.

All stakeholder groups expressed NIAAS' need to further streamline its tools, determine how

they fit all together into an “approach” and to identify more clearly what it means for NIAAS to bring this approach to community work. In addition, NIAAS faces the challenge of growing the numbers of participants who make a commitment to regular involvement. NIAAS events have affected a large number of participants as a whole, but only a much smaller number have participated on an ongoing basis.

Core Group members and other participants want NIAAS to make progress in defining the best form for the Initiative in the future. Key questions facing NIAAS include:

- Will the Initiative remain a program of CSIO?
- Should NIAAS form its own non-profit organization or is it best to take the form of a loose network of individuals?
- Would it be best to develop a train the trainer model for NIAAS resource sharing?

Most respondents felt that articulating a clearer model for the work and identifying the best structure for that work will best help NIAAS address its mission.

This evaluation comes at a critical juncture for NIAAS and offers a strategic opportunity for NIAAS to be intentional in shaping its future. The following opportunities for growth are grounded in the desires and visions expressed by Core Group members, long-time participants, and organizational partners as they considered a future direction for NIAAS:

- Develop clarity about NIAAS’s identity as an educational entity or leadership development entity;
- Define clear elements of NIAAS’s model for building solidarity between immigrants of color and African Americans. Many of these elements have been identified in this report;
- Increase the diversity of participants; The majority of stakeholders interviewed expressed a desire for NIAAS to reach a larger, more intergenerational and multicultural audience. Particularly, they wanted to see NIAAS engage a more diverse set of immigrants of color and bring more young people to its events;
- Explore various forms for the work in order to broaden the audience and expands NIAAS reach, such as a coalition, a network, a membership organization, or a train-the-trainer identity;
- Figure out how to establish long-term relationships with more participants, with the view that their engagement goes beyond an event;
- Identify the capacities necessary to be a facilitator of NIAAS’s work and offer training for those who are interested;
- Utilize the skills and connections within the Core Group or among long time

“I would like to see a little bit more focus. I think we have tried, but this thing is so huge. We can enter it in so many ways and through so many lenses. Let’s go back to the mission; what are we really trying to do?”

-Core Group member

participants to help improve outreach. For example, if a Core Group member has writing skills, engage them in writing a blog post after an event or have a Core Group Member encourage another organization they are part of to co-sponsor an event;

- Increase the use of social media to promote visibility. This may be accomplished through creating internships for college students;
- Schedule events during weeknights at a central location for the community; This may help engage potential participants who have been unable to make events that have usually been held on the weekends; and
- Be more explicit about addressing systemic racism, exclusion, and issues related to living and working in a white-dominated space.

As NIAAS considers how to broaden its audience and further define its theory of change, there are two challenges that will have to be considered:

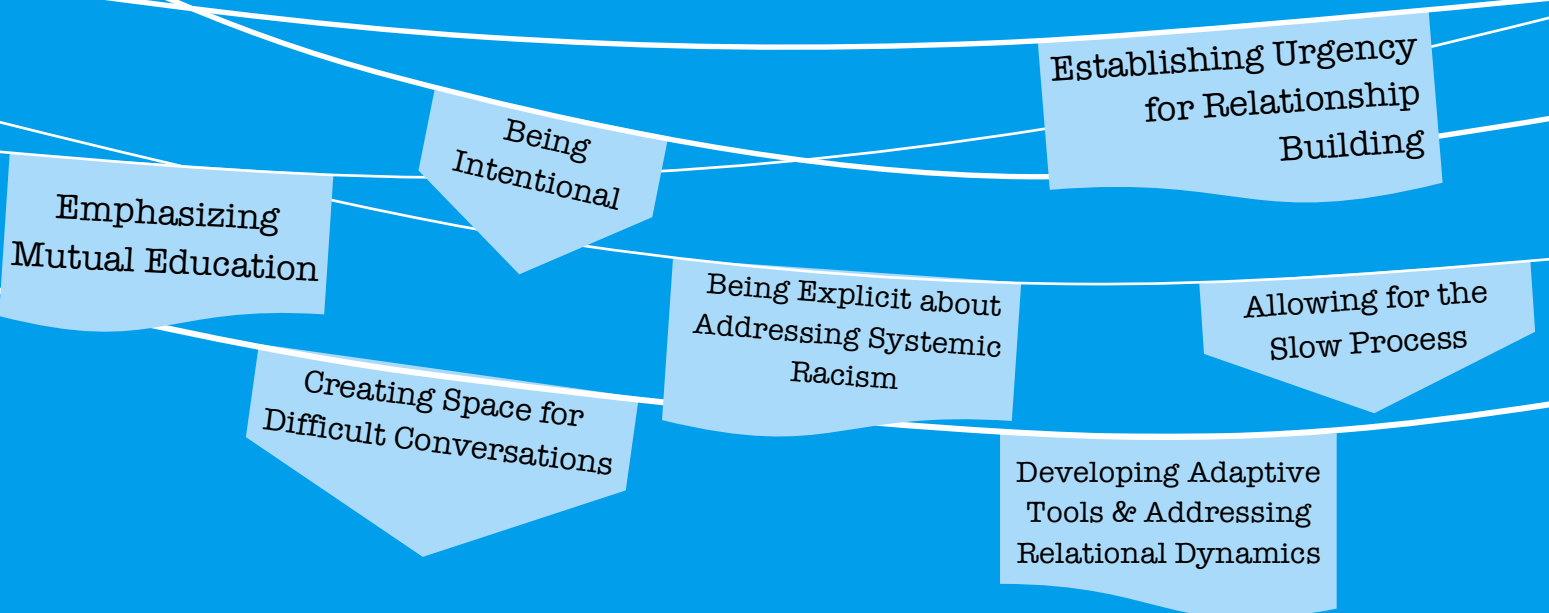
1. The majority of evaluation stakeholders would like the Initiative to broaden its audience and create spaces for long-term relationships. How can NIAAS work to expand its reach into new communities while also creating opportunities for meaningful, long-term relationships with its participants? What level of relationship building is appropriate and sustainable if NIAAS would like to expand its reach?
2. NIAAS primarily engages organizers and community leaders of color who are often overworked and lack the safety nets and financial support their work deserves. Often burnout is high among this group. How does NIAAS engage this group of organizers and leaders of color in a slow and intense process while acknowledging their conditions and justified resistance to a system that oppresses them?

Source: NIAAS, Connecting the Dots workshop led by United for a Fair Economy, 2014



Reflections for the Movement

NIAAS has created pathways to open conversations about systemic racism and oppression between immigrants of color and African Americans that can be utilized by others in the social justice field. In particular, lessons learned about transformative relationship building offer guidelines for others working to build solidarity and overcome barriers erected as a result of systemic racism. Core practices to be shared with the larger movement include:



As racial violence and hatred continue to saturate media and popular rhetoric, the insights gained from NIAAS's initial years of work offer an opportunity to dive deeper into the work of building the relationships and solidarity that will allow more communities to transform, heal, and regain their full humanity.

Glossary of *some* terms used (not exhaustive)

This glossary describes commonly used terms within NIAAS and defines how these terms are used within NIAAS specifically rather than in a general societal way.

People of Color: NIAAS recognizes that this term may differ regionally. This refers to people who identify as something other than white and are typically perceived in society as non-white. This can include black, African American, Caribbean-American, Asian, Asian-American, North African, Latino, Hispanic peoples, etc. These identities are socially defined and constructed in a society based on white supremacy.

White Supremacy: A historically based system which is reproduced by institutions, where individuals who are understood to be white, a social construction, are considered to be superior, and are entitled to and accrue more social and political benefits and rewards as accorded by this system which privileges whiteness or being white.

Systemic Racism: Systemic racism occurs when the way a society is structured systematically ends up giving advantages to some and disadvantages to others.

Immigrant of Color: Someone who has moved to a new country that is not their country of origin or birth. In NIAAS, immigrant refers to a person who has moved to the United States from another country.

African American: For this report, African Americans refer to the direct descendants of captive Africans who survived the slavery era within the boundaries of the present United States. There were many events and issues, both resolved and ongoing, that were faced by African Americans. Some of these were slavery, reconstruction, development of the African American community, participation in the great military conflicts of the United States, racial segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement.

Popular education: an approach to education, based on the work of Paulo Friere, a Brazilian educator and writer, working for literacy education that was aimed at the poor and politically disenfranchised to empower them to take control of their learning and take action to effect social change. This approach was referred to as education for “critical consciousness”. Today, it is an educational approach where participants engage each other and educators as co-learners to critically reflect on issues within their community and take action to create change for justice.

Community Organizing: is a live movement and a dynamic process through which people affected by the same problem make the decision to get informed, analyze the issue and get involved as a group in searching for solutions, not just for them, but the community in general.

Transformational: a leadership and organizing strategy which prioritizes work with multiple domains of social systems: hearts and minds, behavior, and structures.

Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank the leaders of color involved in NIAAS' work through its first 4 years and those that through interviews, dialogue and example have shaped the thinking of this report and are paving the way to NIAAS' future. We'd especially like to thank our Core Group, actual and former members, who have been the backbone of this initiative. We are grateful for their belief in NIAAS' vision and purpose and for allowing themselves to be the laboratory for ideas, practices, failures, successes, and experiments. We thank them for their willingness to be vulnerable and to have difficult conversations; for bringing their experience, knowledge and energy to this initiative; for their countless voluntary hours to help bring NIAAS to where it is now; and for continuing to guide the initiative and make it accountable to the ones it was created with and for - the people of color of Boston and beyond.

CSIO gives special thanks to the Haymarket People's Fund and the Barr Foundation for their financial support, which has allowed NIAAS to develop and reach its current stage. We salute these foundations for allowing NIAAS to find its own path, develop its own tools, and be free to build a bottom up initiative in which the voices of people of color are at the center of its activities and vision.

Appendix 1: Stakeholder Groups

	Stakeholder Group	Method	Number of participants	Number of Immigrants of Color	Number of African Americans	Number of Other	Number of Whites
1	Co-Coordiators	Individual Interviews	2	1	1		
2	Core Group Members	Focus group or small group interview	9	4	5		
3	Active Participants	Small group or individual interview	5	2	2	1	
4	Former Participants	Individual Interview	2	2			
5	Organizational representatives	Interview	2	2	1		
6	National Conference Coordinator	Interview	1				1
7	Leaders doing similar work but have not participated in NIAAS events	Interview	2	1		1	
8	Foundation representatives	Interview	4	2	1		1
	Total participants		27	14	10	2	2

Appendix 2: Examples of Events

Workshops & Dialogues:

Are We Actors Or Spectators of Our Own History? (May 2011)

Using participatory theater tools, this dialogue explored the power relationships shaping community change. We specifically studied what neighborhood organizing against urban renewal the 1970s in Boston teaches us about building power now. Long-time activists Mel King and Vanessa Calderon, two key figures from the African American and Latino communities who took key organizing roles during that period, described how communities of color in the South End and across Boston organized to defend their neighborhoods against gentrification ('urban removal'!). They described how African Americans and Puerto Ricans were vocal, well organized, and united in Tent City and Villa Victoria struggles.

Time For The Real Fight: A post-election dialogue (December 2012)

Various exit polls show that 93% of Black people, 71% of Latinos, and 76% of Asians re-elected Barack Obama to another term. If it takes a coalition to win elections, then what does it take for a coalition to win justice? How do we build power to be stronger together?

Trayvon Martin Dialogue (July 2013)

NIAAS held a dialogue in Boston with about 45 community leaders who came to talk about the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the killing of Trayvon Martin and the meaning of it in our society. We tried to answer questions such as: Why is the judicial system applied so unevenly across race? Why does it presume that black men and boys are guilty? What do black parents tell their sons? What is the historical context of how this injustice is targeted uniquely to black men and boys? and Why "looking suspicious" has become the de facto practice of racial profiling?

I'm Migration workshop: Part I (June 2014)

This workshop focused on our shared history of movement around the world. We held a very participatory dialogue that incorporated theater of the oppressed and participatory facilitation techniques so while people discussed the topic they learned how to use NIAAS tools.

Example of NIAAS Participating in Local Events in greater Boston:

Brazilian Immigrant Festival (September 2013)

NIAAS joined the Festival with a table at which we opened conversations about the roots of migration and slavery, and shared stories of passage. Using the Participatory Mapping activity we developed, we had families respond to 3 questions regarding their migration histories that helped us facilitate a dialogue with them, their families and friends.

Examples of participation in National Conferences:

Conference: National Immigrant Integration Conference (2013)

Session: Creating Safe Spaces to Address Tensions: A Workshop for Using Dialogue

In this hands-on training, participants learned how dialogue can be used to share experiences, help people appreciate new viewpoints, and build empathy, connection and community. This session showcased a model for dialogue that incorporates aspects of the Theater of the Oppressed, a methodology that promotes social and political change. They experienced first-hand a dialogue model simulation that helps people connect across complex issues and can be used back in your community to help build greater understanding between immigrants and diverse receiving communities' members. Session participants will also had the opportunity to practice the methods they learned in smaller groups.

NIAAS creates opportunities and spaces for dialogue, relationship, and solidarity among Immigrant of Color and African Americans communities of greater Boston.

